

March 19, 2021**Immediate Release****Contact:** JoAnn Cavanaugh, Director Public Relations
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Catholic Health to Redevelop St. Joseph Campus into Thriving Outpatient and Ambulatory Care Center

Expanded Orthopaedic Surgery Services Set to Resume on March 29

Prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Catholic Health had been preparing to implement its 2020-2025 Strategic Plan. Like many things, the plan was put on hold to respond to the COVID crisis. With COVID admissions declining and vaccines changing the trajectory of the virus, the health system continues to look to the future and move forward with plans to continue to lead the transformation of healthcare in Western New York.

“A key component of our strategic plan is to continue to build regional centers of excellence across Catholic Health to better meet the needs of our community and advance our journey of national recognition for quality and patient safety,” said Mark Sullivan, President & CEO of Catholic Health.

For the health system, that includes maintaining comprehensive cardiac and stroke services at Mercy Hospital of Buffalo, with growth opportunities in neuroscience services; expanding vascular, bariatric and women’s services at Sisters of Charity Hospital’s Main St. Campus; growing orthopaedic centers of excellence at Kenmore Mercy Hospital and St. Joseph Campus; and increasing access to care in Niagara County at Mount St. Mary’s Hospital and its upcoming Lockport Memorial Campus to further meet the needs of these unique communities.

For St. Joseph Campus, which has served as Catholic Health’s primary COVID Treatment Center, plans are in place to redevelop the campus into a center for outpatient and ambulatory care. Future plans also call for the development of a much-needed inpatient unit for substance use treatment services.

“Like many hospitals regionally and nationally pre-COVID, St. Joseph Campus was seeing a sharp decline in its inpatient volume,” explains Sullivan. “With more and more healthcare services being provided on an outpatient basis, the location and design of St. Joseph Campus lends itself to becoming an active and thriving ambulatory care center with a concentrated focus on emergency, endoscopy/GI, orthopaedic, and rehabilitation services.”

With more than 85% of joint replacement surgery being performed on an outpatient basis, Catholic Health is set to resume orthopaedic surgery at St. Joseph Campus on March 29 after more than a year hiatus. Plans also include expanding the hospital's orthopaedic surgery program by shifting all ortho-paedic cases from Sisters Main St. Campus to St. Joseph Campus.

"Prior to COVID-19, St. Joseph Campus offered nationally recognized orthopaedic care, with surgical out-comes that are among the best in the region," said Sullivan. "With St. Joseph's team of highly-skilled surgeons, specially-trained nurses and support staff, state-of-the-art surgical facilities, and central loca-tion, we can offer patients and families the highest quality care with greater comfort and convenience."

Maintaining 24/7 emergency care for the local community, St. Joseph Campus will reopen its Emergency Department in early May following some facility improvements. With the hospital's new ambulatory care model, patients who need to be admitted for a higher level of care, which averages less than 10 percent, will be stabilized and transferred to other Catholic Health facilities based on their medical needs. Other medical services that will remain at the campus include the Metabolic Center for Wellness, Endoscopy/GI Unit, and Sleep Care.

As COVID numbers continue to decline, St. Joseph Campus will gradually close its ICU and most of its inpatient nursing units. Catholic Health plans to stop admitting COVID patients to the hospital on April 1. All remaining COVID patients are now isolated on a closed floor with separate transport routes and restricted access. As it has for the past year, St. Joseph Campus will continue to maintain the benchmark it has set in disinfection and cleaning practices to protect the safety of all patients and staff.

With the transition of services at St. Joseph Campus, some clinical and non-clinical positions will be eliminated or transitioned to other roles. "Our goal is to offer impacted staff comparable employment opportunities within our system," Sullivan said. "Working with our Union partners, our aim is to main-tain wages and benefits for associates who are affected by these changes. We thank the CWA and SEIU for working with us to support our associates."

As healthcare delivery continues to evolve, Catholic Health is proactively preparing for the future to meet the changing medical needs of the Buffalo-Niagara region.

"Our plan to strengthen and expand hospital-based centers of excellence and redevelop St. Joseph Campus will mean new opportunities for our system to improve care and access for our community," Sullivan continued. "It will also create a clearer future for St. Joseph Campus and its dedicated staff, who will forever be remembered for the vital role they played in our system and community throughout the COVID pandemic."